



Flexing the Flexibility of ARP-HCY: #4: Expanding Staff Capacity

While the McKinney-Vento Act requires that every school district [designate a liaison](#) to carry out ten specific duties to identify and support students experiencing homelessness, it is assigned to staff who have other duties. As a result, lack of staff capacity undermines the identification and services available to McKinney-Vento students, and limits community partnerships and coordination.

ARP-HCY funds can be used to increase staff capacity by expanding part-time positions, adding hours to existing staff, or contracting with community-based organizations for additional capacity. School districts have used ARP-HCY funds to support:

- Outreach specialists
- Early childhood coordinators
- Transportation coordinators
- Systems navigators (including housing navigators)
- School social workers
- Counselors
- Academic specialists
- Postsecondary specialists

The [U.S. Department of Education \(ED\) guidance](#) specifically names hiring or retaining staff as an eligible use of funds, or contracting with community based organizations that can help families effectively navigate housing and other support systems. It also clarifies that ARP-HCY funds may be used to add staff hours to support early childhood education and college and career readiness activities.

Strategies for Sustainability

To address concerns about sustainability of these positions after the deadline for ARP-HCY funds, school districts can consider the ways in which funding from other sources, like Title I, Title III, Title IV, etc., can be blended and braided to fund positions that will meet the targeted needs of students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, as states and districts make plans for sustainability, it is important to collect data on the outcomes that can be linked to staffing and increased capacity provided by ARP-HCY – for example, increased identification and attendance. These data can be used to make the case for continuing support in the future.

Local Spotlights: Using ARP-HCY to Expand Staff Capacity

Visiting Teachers: Capital School District, Delaware

Capital School District employs two full-time visiting teachers focusing on attendance, foster care, and homelessness, and one part-time paraprofessional supporting the school district's McKinney-Vento work. With ARP-HCY funds, the school district was able to turn a part-time position into a full-time staff member focusing on supporting students and families experiencing homelessness.

Behavior Interventionist: Washington Court House City Schools, Ohio

Washington Court House City Schools (WCHCS) is using ARP-HCY funds to provide tutoring and wraparound services. A data review showed that many students experiencing homelessness were struggling with behavior concerns. With ARP-HCY funds, the district hired a McKinney-Vento Behavior Technician, who is trained by the district Prevention Coordinator. The district Prevention Coordinator, who is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), goes into classrooms, assesses what interventions the student would benefit from, and then the McKinney-Vento Behavior Technician implements the interventions with students experiencing homelessness. This has allowed WCHCS to better support students with behavior struggles due to the trauma they've experienced, as well as to model interactions and communication strategies.

Ardmore City Schools, Oklahoma

ARP-HCY funds will provide the opportunity for the district to increase capacity to serve the homeless student population. Stipends will be given to staff, points of contact, at each school within the district to support identification (with a focus on unenrolled students and those who are in the early childhood education age-range). School site points of contact will also aid to increase awareness among teachers and parents about the rights and resources available for students and families experiencing homelessness.

Additional Resources

- [Allowable and Strategic uses of American Rescue Plan Homeless Children and Youth Funds \(ARP-HCY\)](#)
- [Progress and Promise: An Early Look at COVID Relief Funds for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#)

REMINDER: ARP-HCY funds may be used for “any expenses necessary to facilitate the identification, enrollment, retention, or educational success of homeless children and youth in

order to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities.” Broad categories included [in ED guidance](#) include:

- Providing wrap-around services (which could be provided in collaboration with and/or through contracts with community-based organizations, and could include academic supports, trauma-informed care, social-emotional support, and mental health services);
- Purchasing needed supplies (e.g., personal protective equipment, eyeglasses, school supplies, personal care items);
- Providing transportation to enable children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities;
- Purchasing cell phones or other technological devices for unaccompanied, homeless children and youth to enable such children and youth to attend school and fully participate in school activities;
- Providing access to reliable, high-speed internet for students through the purchase of internet-connected devices/equipment, mobile hotspots, wireless service plans, or installation of Community Wi-Fi Hotspots (e.g., at homeless shelters), especially in underserved communities;
- Paying for short-term, temporary housing (e.g., a few days in a motel) when such emergency housing is the only reasonable option for COVID-safe temporary housing and when necessary to enable the homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities (including summer school); and
- Providing store cards/prepaid debit cards to purchase materials necessary for students to participate fully in school activities.”

In addition, LEAs may use funds for [any of the sixteen uses permitted by the McKinney-Vento Act \(42 U.S.C. 11433\(d\)\)](#).

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